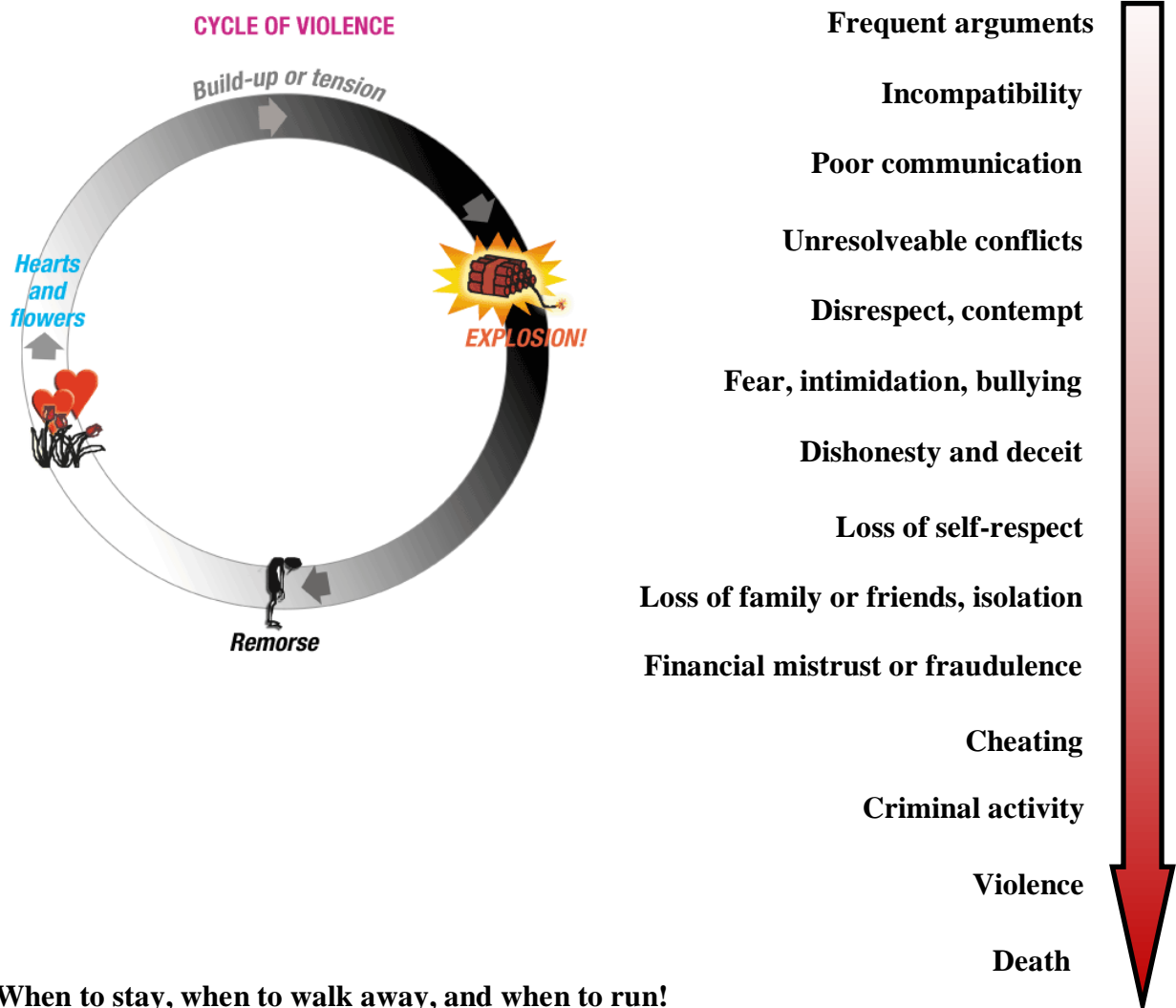


## When to stay, when to walk away and when to run!!

*“In my last relationship I realized that my partner was self-centered, self-serving, arrogant, ignorant, unfaithful, hypercritical, abusive, an under-achiever and an alcoholic. I was devastated when he broke up with me.”* [www.TigressLuv.com](http://www.TigressLuv.com)

Problem relationships are like taking a ride in an elevator—whatever floor you entered, you get to decide how far you descend before you seek help or get off.

What is your bottom line— your romantic relationship deal breaker?  
What are your deal breakers for family relationships? For friendships?  
When is enough, enough with coworkers, colleagues or employers?



When to stay, when to walk away, and when to run!  
The quiz on the next page helps you decide.

## Relationships: When to stay, when to walk away, and when to run!

*"I'm not upset that you lied to me, I'm upset that from now on I can't believe you."*

\*Friedrich Nietzsche

\*Derivation of a quote from *Beyond Good and Evil*. "Not that you lied to me but that I no longer believe you has shaken me."

### How do you know when it's time to end a romantic relationship?

**Never betray your own better judgment or your values. End a romantic relationship before you compromise your self-respect or physical safety.** There are four conditions when most psychologists and clergy agree that ending a relationship may be the right action. The four conditions are known as the "Four A's":

1. **Abandonment** (The partner left and is not coming back).
2. **Addiction** (Especially if children need protection).
3. **Abuse** (Especially physical abuse or if children need protection).
4. **Adultery** (Ending the relationship is an option, not a requirement).

Relationship problems unrelated to the "4 A's" require deeper investigation. Ending committed relationships simply because one or both partners' "*fell out of love*," "*got bored*" or "*grew apart*" leaves each partner at risk of regrets or of repeating the same patterns in future relationships.

### Before you walk away, answer the following 8 questions:

- \*Yes No** 1. Is this relationship harmful or dangerous to me, my children or to my family?
- Yes No.** 2. If I had an adult child or other beloved in a relationship exactly like mine, would I advise ending the relationship?
- Yes No.** 3. Have I treated my partner as they wish to be treated?
- Yes No.** 4. Have I taken responsibility for advocating and negotiating my needs in this relationship?
- Yes No.** 5. Have I continued to live true to my values and beliefs during this relationship?
- Yes No.** 6. Have I exhausted all options to communicate openly in this relationship?
- Yes No.** 7. Have I exhausted all options to negotiate a relationship we can both agree to?
- Yes No.** 8. Would I respect myself for walking away from this commitment?

**\*Scoring: Answering "Yes" to question #1** indicates the need for immediate protection, legal action and professional intervention. (Secure or remove guns and other weapons.)

**"Yes" to questions #2 through #8** indicates that your values are aligned with ending the relationship.

**"No" to questions #3 through #8** indicates a need to seek more resources or professional help to improve conflict resolution and communication skills.

## Dealing with difficult, damaging, or dangerous people. Cycle of abuse

**“What if I assert myself by advocating for myself, setting limits, maintaining boundaries, and addressing conflict but then someone threatens self-harm... or threatens to harm me?”**  
*TJ age 34*

**Answer:** Difficult people who are so deeply disturbed that they pose a danger to themselves, or to others require professional interventions. Seeking help may be embarrassing and frightening, but safety is important. Setting limits on harassment, intimidation, and abuse before it turns violent is the right thing to do. Utilize whichever resources are necessary when concerned about harm to self or to others.

- Let’s think for moment about what happens if you do not advocate for yourself, you don’t set limits, and you fail to maintain boundaries or to address conflict. What happens to your dignity? Your self-esteem? Your integrity? Are you really more safe? Did the difficult person receive the help or the consequences that they needed to address a mental health crisis or potentially criminal behavior? I appreciate the dilemma that dealing with difficult people creates. Avoidance caused by fear is a common response to dealing with difficult people, but not necessarily the best response.
- Difficult people cause harm in various ways. Their harassment or abuse may escalate into violence at home or school, in the workplace or place of worship. Difficult people could be a 12-year-old child, your new boss, or even your elderly grandparent. **Abuse is defined as any act in which a person or persons are abused, threatened, intimidated, or assaulted.** Abuse covers a wide range of actions aimed at maintaining power and control. *Rumors, gossip, swearing, verbal abuse, gaslighting, yelling, screaming, tantrums, anger-related incidents, sabotage, psychological trauma, pranks, hazing, property damage, vandalism, theft, pushing, physical assaults, rape, arson and murder are all examples of the range from abuse to violence.*

### Bottom line

- **Fear** of [suicide](#) or threats of homicide should not convince you to ignore, accept or tolerate dangerous behavior from anyone.
- **Threatening self-harm or harm to others may be a symptom of a mental illness.** Remember mental illness is brain illness. Seek professional interventions for your own personal safety and for the protections of others.
- **Never let anyone blackmail you** into something you believe is wrong or dangerous.
- **You do not have to struggle with this alone.** Consider which resources are your best fit, talk openly with trusted people, and seek professional help or legal action and advocacy for your rights.

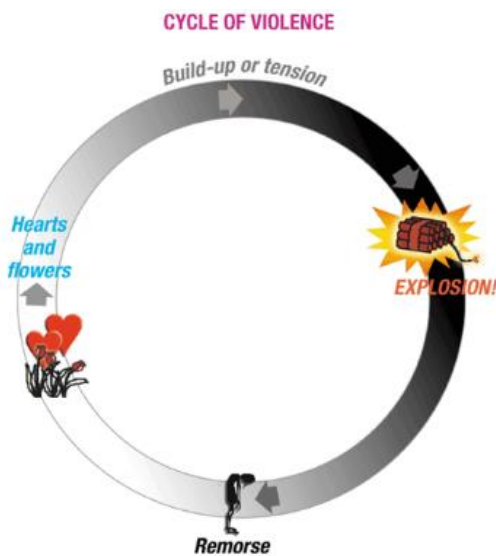
\*2020 update: Access to adequate mental health interventions, community services, employment or police protection are not equally guaranteed for all people in every community. Use your vote to help resolve systemic injustices.

**“Everyone tells me to end my relationship because of the lying, cheating, abuse and betrayal. But I am in love, what should I do?”**  
*Chris, age 42*

**Answer.** People often shop for cars with more logic than when choosing relationships. If a car ran efficiently and effectively for 50% of the time but the other 50% it broke down, rolled into a ditch or burst into flames, would you place your children in that car? What if it “only” burst into flames 20% of the time? Would you keep driving, seek a repair shop or look for a new ride?

Relationships built on a foundation of deception, disrespect or violence create emotional wounds and broken trust. This type of relationship is referred to as “*Cycle of Violence*” developed in the 1970s by Lenore Walker to explain patterns of behavior in abusive relationships. Each person in this relationship participates in the cycle. Each has a role. Relationship violence is not limited to romantic couplings. Patterns of abuse exist in workplace relationships, friendships as well as in siblings, parents and extended family members. Any relationship can transform into a dysfunctional pattern with a victim and an abuser.

As you read the examples below, remember that the quote could be talking about Grandma, your coworker, even your best friend.... Or this could be what others say about you.



*“I know they love me. It’s not their fault when they blow up. I always say or do something to set them off.”*

*“He says only lied to protect me and he is really sorry that he ruined my credit.”*

*“We only hit each other when we drink too much, so I wouldn’t call that a violent relationship.”*

*“They don’t understand how hurtful they are. If I tell them how I feel, I am afraid they might never speak to me again.”*

**Continuing to tolerate the cycle reinforces the behavior.** Upon further inspection, you may begin to

understand that “lying, cheating, betrayal and abuse” are not compatible with “respect, trust, loyalty and love”. Rather than asking “Do you love your partner?” ask yourself the following questions:

1. *Do I respect my partner? Do I feel respected?*
2. *Do I trust my partner? Do I feel trusted?*
3. *Do I have confidence in my partner? Do I feel confident?*
4. *Am I confident with myself as a relationship role model?*
5. *Would I want my son, daughter, sibling or best friend to be in a relationship exactly like mine?*

**Breaking the cycle of violence requires safety, resources and support.** The next page offers more insight into dealing with difficult people.

## Relationships with difficult, disordered, or addicted people.

**You thought things would get better.** You never intended to be in a relationship like this. You hoped for change. And waited. And waited. **Now you realize it is time for you to choose a healthier response** to your beloved's addictive, abusive, impulsive, inappropriate, or intolerable behavior. Even though you use the tools to improve your communication skills, demonstrate assertiveness and enforce limits, **practicing assertiveness does not guarantee that others will respond positively.**

- ❖ Mentally ill and addicted people may refuse to engage in healthier relationship rules.
- ❖ Some will ignore or even sabotage your attempt to negotiate changes.
- ❖ Some will consider your self-improvement and assertiveness as “selfish.”
- ❖ Others will react with increased hostility and may even threaten violence.



**Substance Use Disorders:** People who are abusing mood-altering substances are not capable of consistently participating in trustworthy relationships. Their substance use creates problems with thoughts, emotions and behaviors. [Consider attending Alanon.](#)

**Raging, angry people:** Whether their anger is limited to intimidation and verbal threats, or their rage has escalated to physical acts of assault, these aggressive personality types rarely respond positively to their beloved's assertiveness or independence. *Police protection, legal action and/or relocation may be necessary. Seek help immediately.*

**Con artists and others who repetitively engage in deception or criminal activity:** As with angry people, deceptive people will not “improve” as loved ones set limits or try to negotiate healthier relationship rules. Because conning, dishonesty and deception are main coping mechanisms for these people, *professional guidance, legal action, protection and even criminal prosecution may be necessary.*



**\*Personality disorders and severe mood disorders:** People who suffer from severe mood disorders, psychotic disorders and personality disorders represent approximately 5.6% of the population in the United States. These disorders challenge abilities to keep loving relationships. **General signs and symptoms of psychiatric disorders may include frequent mood swings, social isolation, angry outbursts, impulsivity, stormy relationships, difficulty maintaining employment, impaired judgement and decision making, increased risk of illegal activity and substance use disorders.**

\*In 2020, there were an estimated 14.2 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States with **Serious Mental Illness (SMI)**. This number represented 5.6% of all U.S. adults. **Prevalence of Any Mental Illness (AMI)** in the United States was 52.9 million adults. 46.2%, or 24.3 million of those with AMI received mental health services in the past year. **Serious mental illness (SMI)** is defined as a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities. The burden of mental illnesses is particularly concentrated among those who experience disability due to SMI. **Any mental illness (AMI)** is defined as a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>